THE

DESERTED VILLAGE.

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THE

DESERTED VILLAGE,

A

POEM.

By OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

THE ELEVENTH EDITION.

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MDCC LXXXIV.

There being a pirated Edition of the DESERTED VILLAGE, *which is mentioned in the Title to be "Printed for the Bookſellers in Town and Country," it is thought neceſſary to prevent the Public from being impoſed on, to inform them, that the ſpurious Edition is extremely incorrect, and contains upwards of ſeventy Errors, which are pointed out, and may be ſeen at* T. CARNAN'S, *in St. Paul's Church-yard.*

The genuine and correct Editions of the DESERTED VILLAGE are printed for J. F. and C. RIVINGTON, T. CARNAN, in St. Paul's Church-yard; and T. CADELL, in the Strand; and are decorated with a Copper-plate Cut in the Title-page.

TO

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

DEAR SIR,

I CAN have no expectations in an addreſs of this kind, either to add to your reputation, or to eſtabliſh my own. You can gain nothing from my admiration, as I am ignorant of that art in which you are ſaid to excel; and I may loſe much by the ſeverity of your judgment, as few have a juſter taſte in poetry than you. Setting intereſt therefore aſide, to which I never paid much attention, I muſt be indulged at preſent in following my affections. The only dedication I ever made was to my brother, becauſe I loved him better than moſt other men. He is ſince dead. Permit me to inſcribe this Poem to you.

How

How far you may be pleaſed with the verſification and mere mechanical parts of this attempt, I don't pretend to enquire; but I know you will object (and indeed ſeveral of our beſt and wiſeſt friends concur in the opinion) that the depopulation it deplores is no where to be ſeen, and the diſorders it laments are only to be found in the poet's own imagination. To this I can ſcarce make any other anſwer, than that I ſincerely believe what I have written; that I have taken all poſſible pains, in my country excurſions, for theſe four or five years paſt, to be certain of what I alledge; and that all my views and enquiries have led me to believe thoſe miſeries real, which I here attempt to diſplay. But this is not the place to enter into an enquiry, whether the country be depopulating, or not; the diſcuſſion would take up much room, and I ſhould prove myſelf, at beſt, an indifferent politician, to tire the reader with a long preface, when I want his unfatigued attention to a long poem.

In regretting the depopulation of the country, I inveigh againſt the increaſe of our luxuries; and here alſo I expect the ſhout of modern politicians

ticians againſt me. For twenty or thirty years paſt, it has been the faſhion to conſider luxury as one of the greateſt national advantages; and all the wiſdom of antiquity in that particular, as erroneous. Still, however, I muſt remain a profeſſed ancient on that head, and continue to think thoſe luxuries prejudicial to ſtates, by which ſo many vices are introduced, and ſo many kingdoms have been undone. Indeed, ſo much has been poured out of late on the other ſide of the queſtion, that merely for the ſake of novelty and variety, one would ſometimes wiſh to be in the right.

I am

Dear Sir,

Your ſincere friend,

And ardent admirer,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

THE

DESERTED VILLAGE.

SWEET AUBURN, loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheared the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed,
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene;
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made;
How often have I blest the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And slights of art and feats of strength went round;

And ſtill as each repeated pleaſure tired,
Succeeding ſports the mirthful band inſpired;
The dancing pair that ſimply ſought renown
By holding out to tire each other down;
The ſwain miſtruſtleſs of his ſmutted face,
While ſecret laughter tittered round the place;
The baſhful virgin's ſide-long looks of love,
The matron's glance that would thoſe looks reprove.
Theſe were thy charms, ſweet village; ſports like theſe,
With ſweet ſucceſſion, taught even toil to pleaſe;
Theſe round thy bowers their chearful influence ſhed,
Theſe were thy charms—But all theſe charms are fled.

Sweet ſmiling village, lovelieſt of the lawn,
Thy ſports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn:
Amidſt thy bowers the tyrant's hand is ſeen,
And deſolation ſaddens all thy green;
One only maſter graſps the whole domain,
And half a tillage ſtints thy ſmiling plain:
No more thy glaſſy brook reflects the day,
But choaked with ſedges, works its weedy way.
Along thy glades, a ſolitary gueſt,
The hollow-ſounding bittern guards its neſt;
Amidſt thy deſert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers, in ſhapeleſs ruin all,
And the long graſs o'ertops the mouldering wall;
And trembling, ſhrinking from the ſpoiler's hand,
Far, far away thy children leave the land.

Ill fares the land, to haſtening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flouriſh, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;

But

But a bold peaſantry, their country's pride,
When once deſtroyed, can never be ſupplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man;
For him light labour ſpread her wholeſome ſtore,
Juſt gave what life required, but gave no more:
His beſt companions, innocence and health;
And his beſt riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train,
Uſurp the land and diſpoſſeſs the ſwain;
Along the lawn, where ſcattered hamlets roſe,
Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp repoſe;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Theſe gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Thoſe calm deſires that aſked but little room,
Thoſe healthful ſports that graced the peaceful ſcene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green;
Theſe far departing ſeek a kinder ſhore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

Sweet AUBURN! parent of the bliſsful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confeſs the tyrant's power.
Here as I take my ſolitary rounds,
Amidſt thy tangling walks, and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapſed, return to view,
Where once the cottage ſtood, the hawthorn grew,
Here, as with doubtful, penſive ſteps I range,
Trace every ſcene, and wonder at the change,
Remembrance wakes with all her buſy train,
Swells at my breaſt, and turns the paſt to pain.

In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and GOD has given my ſhare—

I ſtill had hopes my lateſt hours to crown,
Amidſt theſe humble bowers to lay me down;
To huſband out life's taper at the cloſe,
And keep the flame from waſting by repoſe.
I ſtill had hopes, for pride attends us ſtill,
Amidſt the Swains to ſhew my book-learned ſkill,
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I ſaw;
And, as an hare whom hounds and horns purſue,
Pants to the place from whence at firſt ſhe flew,
I ſtill had hopes, my long vexations paſt,
Here to return—and die at home at laſt.

O bleſt retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care that never muſt be mine.
How happy he who crowns in ſhades like theſe,
A youth of labour with an age of eaſe;
Who quits a world where ſtrong temptations try,
And, ſince 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!
For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;
No ſurly porter ſtands in guilty ſtate
To ſpurn imploring famine from the gate;
But on he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending Virtue's friend;
Bends to the grave with unperceived decay,
While reſignation gently ſlopes the way;
And all his proſpects brightening to the laſt,
His Heaven commences ere the world be paſt!

Sweet was the ſound when oft at evening's cloſe,
Up yonder hill the village murmur roſe;
There as I paſt with careleſs ſteps and ſlow,
The mingling notes came ſoftened from below;

The ſwain reſponſive as the milk-maid ſung,
The ſober herd that lowed to meet their young;
The noiſy geeſe that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children juſt let looſe from ſchool;
The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whiſpering wind,
And the loud laugh that ſpoke the vacant mind:
Theſe all in ſweet confuſion ſought the ſhade,
And filled each pauſe the nightingale had made.
But now the ſounds of population fail,
No chearful murmurs fluctuate in the gale;
No buſy ſteps the graſs-grown foot-way tread,
For all the bloomy fluſh of life is fled!
All but yon widowed, ſolitary thing,
That feebly bends beſide the plaſhy ſpring;
She, wretched matron, forced, in age, for bread,
To ſtrip the brook with mantling creſſes ſpread,
To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
To ſeek her nightly ſhed, and weep till morn;
She only left of all the harmleſs train,
The ſad hiſtorian of the penſive plain.

Near yonder copſe, where once the garden ſmiled,
And ſtill where many a garden-flower grows wild;
There, where a few torn ſhrubs the place diſcloſe,
The village preacher's modeſt manſion roſe.
A man he was, to all the country dear,
And paſſing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wiſhed to change his place;
Unpractiſed he to fawn, or ſeek for power,
By doctrines faſhioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More ſkill to raiſe the wretched than to riſe.

His

His houſe was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain;
The long remembered beggar was his gueſt,
Whoſe beard deſcending ſwept his aged breaſt;
The ruined ſpendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claim allowed;
The broken ſoldier kindly bade to ſtay,
Sate by his fire, and talked the night away;
Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of ſorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch, and ſhewed how fields were won.
Pleaſed with his gueſts, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careleſs their merits, or their faults to ſcan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And even his failings leaned to Virtue's ſide;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new fledged offſpring to the ſkies;
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beſide the bed where parting life was layed,
And ſorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns diſmayed;
The reverend champion ſtood. At his controul,
Deſpair and anguiſh fled the ſtruggling ſoul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raiſe,
And his laſt faultering accents whiſpered praiſe.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;

Truth

Truth from his lips prevailed with double ſway,
And fools, who came to ſcoff, remained to pray.
The ſervice paſt, around the pious man,
With ſteady zeal each honeſt ruſtic ran;
Even children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to ſhare the good man's ſmile.
His ready ſmile a parent's warmth expreſt,
Their welfare pleaſed him, and their cares diſtreſt;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his ſerious thoughts had reſt in Heaven.
As ſome tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the ſtorm,
Tho' round its breaſt the rolling clouds are ſpread,
Eternal ſunſhine ſettles on its head.

Beſide yon ſtraggling fence that ſkirts the way,
With bloſſomed furze unprofitably gay,
There, in his noiſy manſion, ſkilled to rule,
The village maſter taught his little ſchool:
A man ſevere he was, and ſtern to view;
I knew him well, and every truant knew;
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's diſaſters in his morning face;
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the buſy whiſper circling round,
Conveyed the diſmal tidings when he frowned:
Yet he was kind; or if ſevere in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault;
The village all declared how much he knew;
'Twas certain he could write, and cypher too:
Lands he could meaſure, terms and tides preſage,
And even the ſtory ran that he could gauge.

In

In arguing too, the parſon owned his ſkill;
For e'en though vanquiſhed, he could argue ſtill;
While words of learned length, and thundering ſound,
Amazed the gazing ruſtics ranged around;
And ſtill they gazed, and ſtill the wonder grew,
That one ſmall head could carry all he knew.

But paſt is all his fame. The very ſpot
Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot.
Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
Where once the ſign-poſt caught the paſſing eye,
Low lies that houſe where nut-brown draughts inſpired,
Where grey-beard mirth and ſmiling toil retired,
Where village ſtateſmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.
Imagination fondly ſtoops to trace
The parlour ſplendours of that feſtive place;
The white-waſhed wall, the nicely ſanded floor,
The varniſhed clock that clicked behind the door;
The cheſt contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a cheſt of drawers by day;
The pictures placed for ornament and uſe,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of gooſe;
The hearth, except when winter chill'd the day,
With aſpen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay;
While broken tea-cups, wiſely kept for ſhow,
Ranged o'er the chimney, gliſtened in a row.

Vain tranſitory ſplendours! could not all
Reprieve the tottering manſion from its fall!
Obſcure it ſinks, nor ſhall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart;
Thither no more the peaſant ſhall repair
To ſweet oblivion of his daily care;

No

No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad ſhall prevail;
No more the ſmith his duſky brow ſhall clear,
Relax his pond'rous ſtrength, and lean to hear;
The hoſt himſelf no longer ſhall be found
Careful to ſee the mantling bliſs go round;
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be preſt,
Shall kiſs the cup to paſs it to the reſt.

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud diſdain,
Theſe ſimple bleſſings of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloſs of art;
Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
The ſoul adopts, and owns their firſt-born ſway;
Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, unmoleſted, unconfined;
But the long pomp, the midnight maſquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed,
In theſe, ere triflers half their wiſh obtain,
The toiling pleaſure ſickens into pain;
And, even while faſhion's brighteſt arts decoy,
The heart diſtruſting aſks, if this be joy?

Ye friends to truth, ye ſtateſmen, who ſurvey
The rich man's joys increaſe, the poor's decay,
'Tis your's to judge, how wide the limits ſtand
Between a ſplendid and a happy land.
Proud ſwells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
And ſhouting folly hails them from her ſhore;
Hoards, even beyond the miſer's wiſh abound,
And rich men flock from all the world around.
Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name
That leaves our uſeful products ſtill the ſame.

Not ſo the loſs. The man of wealth and pride,
Takes up a ſpace that many poor ſupplied;
Space for his lake; his park's extended bounds;
Space for his horſes, equipage, and hounds;
The robe that wraps his limbs in ſilken ſloth,
Has robbed the neighbouring fields of half their growth;
His ſeat, where ſolitary ſports are ſeen,
Indignant ſpurns the cottage from the green;
Around the world each needful product flies,
For all the luxuries the world ſupplies.
While thus the land adorned for pleaſure, all
In barren ſplendour feebly waits the fall.

As ſome fair female unadorned and plain,
Secure to pleaſe while youth confirms her reign,
Slights every borrowed charm that dreſs ſupplies,
Nor ſhares with art the triumph of her eyes.
But when thoſe charms are paſt, for charms are frail,
When time advances, and when lovers fail,
She then ſhines forth, ſolicitous to bleſs,
In all the glaring impotence of dreſs.
Thus fares the land, by luxury betrayed;
In Nature's ſimpleſt charms at firſt arrayed;
But verging to decline, its ſplendours riſe,
Its viſtas ſtrike, its palaces ſurprize;
While ſcourged by famine from the ſmiling land,
The mournful peaſant leads his humble band;
And while he ſinks without one arm to ſave,
The country blooms—a garden, and a grave.

Where then, ah where, ſhall Poverty reſide,
To 'ſcape the preſſure of contiguous pride?
If to ſome common's fenceleſs limits ſtrayed,
He drives his flock to pick the ſcanty blade,

Thoſe

Thoſe fenceleſs fields the ſons of wealth divide,
And even the bare-worn common is denied.

If to the city ſped—What waits him there?
To ſee profuſion that he muſt not ſhare;
To ſee ten thouſand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury, and thin mankind;
To ſee thoſe joys the ſons of pleaſure know,
Extorted from his fellow-creature's wo.
Here while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There the pale artiſt plies the ſickly trade;
Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps diſplay,
There the black gibbet glooms beſide the way.
The dome where Pleaſure holds her midnight reign,
Here richly deckt, admits the gorgeous train;
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing ſquare,
The rattling chariots claſh, the torches glare.
Sure ſcenes like theſe no troubles e'er annoy!
Sure theſe denote one univerſal joy!
Are theſe thy ſerious thoughts? Ah, turn thine eyes
Where the poor houſeleſs ſhivering female lies.
She once, perhaps, in village plenty bleſt,
Has wept at tales of innocence diſtreſt;
Her modeſt looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primroſe peeps beneath the thorn:
Now loſt to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door ſhe lays her head,
And pinch'd with cold, and ſhrinking from the ſhower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckleſs hour,
When idly firſt, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

Do thine, ſweet AUBURN, thine, the loveliеſt train,
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?

Even now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's [illegible]

Ah, no. To diſtant climes, a dreary ſcene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting ſteps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their wo.
Far different there from all that charm'd before,
The various terrors of that horrid ſhore;
Thoſe blazing ſuns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely ſhed intolerable day;
Thoſe matted woods where birds forget to ſing,
But ſilent bats in drowſy cluſters cling;
Thoſe poiſonous fields with rank luxuriance crowned,
Where the dark ſcorpion gathers death around;
Where at each ſtep the ſtranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful ſnake;
Where crouching tygers wait their hapleſs prey,
And ſavage men, more murderous ſtill than they;
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landſcape with the ſkies,
Far different theſe from every former ſcene,
The cooling brook, the graſſy veſted green,
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
That only ſheltered thefts of harmleſs love.

Good Heaven! what ſorrows gloom'd that parting day,
That called them from their native walks away;
When the poor exiles, every pleaſure paſt,
Hung round their bowers, and fondly looked their laſt,
And took a long farewel, and wiſhed in vain
For ſeats like theſe beyond the weſtern main;
And ſhuddering ſtill to face the diſtant deep,
Returned and wept, and ſtill returned to weep.

The

The good old ſire, the firſt prepared to go
To new found worlds, and wept for others wo.
But for himſelf, in conſcious virtue brave,
He only wiſhed for worlds beyond the grave.
His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpleſs years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.
With louder plaints the mother ſpoke her woes,
And bleſt the cot where every pleaſure roſe;
And kiſt her thoughtleſs babes with many a tear,
And clapt them cloſe, in ſorrow doubly dear;
Whilſt her fond huſband ſtrove to lend relief,
In all the ſilent manlineſs of grief.

O luxury! thou curſt by Heaven's decree,
How ill exchanged are things like theſe for thee!
How do thy potions with inſidious joy,
Diffuſe their pleaſures only to deſtroy!
Kingdoms by thee, to ſickly greatneſs grown,
Boaſt of a florid vigour not their own;
At every draught more large and large they grow,
A bloated maſs of rank unwieldy wo;
Till ſapped their ſtrength, and every part unſound,
Down, down they ſink, and ſpread a ruin round.

Even now the devaſtation is begun,
And half the buſineſs of deſtruction done;
Even now, methinks, as pondering here I ſtand,
I ſee the rural virtues leave the land.
Down where yon anchoring veſſel ſpreads the ſail,
That idly waiting flaps with every gale,
Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Paſs from the ſhore, and darken all the ſtrand.

Contented toil, and hoſpitable care,
And kind connubial tenderneſs, are there;
And piety, with wiſhes placed above,
And ſteady loyalty, and faithful love;
And thou, ſweet Poetry, thou lovelieſt maid,
Still firſt to fly where ſenſual joys invade;
Unfit in theſe degenerate times of ſhame,
To catch the heart, or ſtrike for honeſt fame;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My ſhame in crowds, my ſolitary pride;
Thou ſource of all my bliſs, and all my wo,
That found'ſt me poor at firſt, and keep'ſt me ſo;
Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurſe of every virtue, fare thee well.
Farewel, and O where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's ſide,
Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in ſnow,
Still let thy voice prevailing over time,
Redreſs the rigours of the inclement clime;
Aid ſlighted truth with thy perſuaſive ſtrain,
Teach erring man to ſpurn the rage of gain;
Teach him, that ſtates of native ſtrength poſſeſt,
Tho' very poor, may ſtill be very bleſt;
That trade's proud empire haſtes to ſwift decay,
As ocean ſweeps the laboured mole away;
While ſelf-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks reſiſt the billows and the ſky.

FINIS.

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